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Liddy for the CIA



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ACCORDING to press reports I've read, President-elect Ronald Reagan is giving serious thought to replacing Stansfield Turner as head of the CIA, a prospect which is reportedly viewed in dismal fashion by Turner.

It seems that Adm. Turner wants to stay on, which is understandable. After all, being head of the CIA is a prestigious and rewarding job. But there is certainly nothing in the record to justify his retention.

In the aftermath of Sen. Frank Church's politically motivated emasculation of the CIA, newly installed President Jimmy Carter came up with the novel idea that Theodore Sorenson, a classical liberal's liberal, should take charge of the intelligence organization. The net effect of such a move would have been to do nothing more than provide the coup de grace to what had been an effective and dependable body.

Fortunately the outcry was of sufficient timbre to give Mr. Carter pause. And so he reached into the ranks of the U.S. Navy and tapped a crony of Naval Academy days—Adm. Stansfield Turner.

That Turner attained the rank of admiral with no help of Mr. Carter should indicate he has a measure of competence insofar as the U.S. Navy is concerned.

But it is not a competence which has been evident in his role as head of the CIA. He has been controversial, which in itself is not negative. But in being controversial he has not produced the sort of organization we once had, and which we need once again.

At this writing I am not aware of any particular individual who might be selected by the Reagan administration to assume the awesome responsibilities of the CIA. And not having read of anyone, I want to project my own choice for head of the CIA—not that that means anything.

A logical choice, in my view, would be G. Gordon Liddy. Now there are those who might think I'm engaging in jest or being frivolous or indulging in the bizarre. After all, Mr. Liddy spent an unwarranted length of time in prison, and was subjected to gross and unconscionable treatment, for his role in the celebrated Watergate affair. And in terms of political realities, it is a bit farfetched to regard him as a contender for high office.

It is appropriate at this point, too, to give credit where credit is due. It was President Carter who extended compassion on Mr. Liddy and who "in the interest of equity and fairness" reduced Mr. Liddy's prison term. During the past four years I suppose I have lashed out at President Carter with more than a fair share of criticism, but he certainly deserves full recognition for his commendable move in the Liddy case.

Reading Mr. Liddy's autobiography, "Will," which I've recently done, is a rewarding and moving experience. His background, his determination, his understanding, his resourcefulness are all most impressive. And they should be utilized by the nation in this critical period.

G. Gordon Liddy is the sort of person who would transform the present CIA into the effective instrument which we need so urgently. He would be a demanding leader who would get results; but at the same time he is not without a sense of humor and possesses a high degree of understanding.

A few days ago there was a newspaper account of Mr. Liddy's new—and amazing—role as folk hero on the nation's college campuses. He does not emulate others on the Watergate affair in caterwauling about his guilt, in wailing mea culpa. Rather, he is a refreshing contrast to the sleazy John Dean and other principals who would say or do anything to save their skins.

In his talks on the campuses, Mr. Liddy gives the sort of perception of the world of today that is so sorely needed in an organization such as the CIA.

A Washington Post story noted that at one college appearance Mr. Liddy said the world in reality "is a bad neighborhood at 2:30 in the morning, and if you're a little old lady out walking, then the least that will happen is your purse will be stolen."

But he noted, "If you are a lineman from the Alabama football team with a club in one hand and a submachine gun in the other, then nobody's going to mess with you."

"The United States is becoming the little old lady."

In terms of political realities I'm aware that there's no chance of G. Gordon Liddy being made head of the CIA. But if we were being pragmatic about looking out for the best interests of the nation, he would be.

G. Gordon Liddy as head of the CIA would enhance our national security.